

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing an identification key for a printing device consumable, said method comprising storing said identification key in a memory affixed to said printing device consumable, receiving said identification key in a printing device and accepting said printing device consumable for use in said printing device only if said identification key identifies a compatible printing device consumable.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving comprises uploading said identification key from said memory to a memory of said printing device.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising uploading an identification interface from said memory to said memory of said printing device and receiving said identification key through said identification interface.

4. A method for providing an identification key to verify identification of a printing device consumable, said method comprising:
storing an identification key on a printing device consumable memory; and
interfacing said memory with said printing device.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising uploading said identification key from said memory to a printing device memory.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising verifying said identification key on said printing device.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein said verifying said identification key comprises:
checking said identification key against a list of authorized keys for said printing device; and

enabling use of said printing device consumable by said printing device if said consumable is compatible with said printing device.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising storing said list of authorized keys on said printing device memory.

9. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
uploading an identification interface from said memory to said printing device; and
accessing said identification key on said memory through said identification interface.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising verifying said identification key on said printing device.

11. The method of claim 16, wherein said verifying said identification key comprises:
checking said identification key against a list of authorized keys for said printing device; and
enabling use of said printing device consumable by said printing device if said consumable is compatible with said printing device.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein said printing device consumable is inoperable in said printing device until said identification key has been verified.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein said consumable is locked with a locking mechanism and the method further comprising unlocking said locking mechanism after said identification key has been verified.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said unlocking comprises receiving a control signal to unlock said locking mechanism from a printing device controller.

15. A method of providing an identification key for a printing device consumable, said method comprising transmitting an identification key from a memory of a printing device consumable installed in a printing device to said printing device and accepting said printing device consumable for use with said printing device only if said identification key identifies an authorized printing device consumable.

16. A method of providing an identification key for a printing device, said method comprising transmitting an identification key from a memory of a printing device to a printing device consumable installed in said printing device and accepting said printing device for use with said printing device consumable only if said identification key identifies an authorized printing device.

17. A method for providing an identification key to verify identification of a printing device, said method comprising:
storing an identification key on a printing device memory;
installing a printing device consumable in said printing device;
interfacing said printing device consumable with said printing device memory; and
using said identification key to identify said printing device as an authorized printing device.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising uploading said identification key from said printing device memory to a memory on said printing device consumable and verifying said identification key with a processor on said printing device consumable.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said verifying said identification key comprises:
checking said identification key against a list of authorized keys; and
identifying said printing device as a member of a group of authorized printing devices if said identification key matches a key on said list of authorized keys.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising unlocking an electronic locking device on said consumable if said printing device is a member of said group.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising unlocking a mechanical locking device on said consumable if said printing device is a member of said group.

22. A consumable for use with a printing device, said consumable comprising:
a printing device consumable; and
a memory coupled to said printing device consumable storing an identification key for identifying said printing device consumable to said printing device.

23. The consumable of claim 22, further comprising a wireless interface communicatively coupled to said memory through which said consumable can communicate with said printing device.

24. The consumable of claim 22 further comprising a wired interface communicatively coupled to said memory through which said consumable can communicate with said printing device.

25. The consumable of claim 22, further comprising an identification interface stored on said memory, which allows access and use of said identification key on said memory.

26. A consumable for use with a printing device, said consumable comprising:
a printing device consumable;
a locking mechanism for selectively rendering said printing device consumable unusable; and
a processor coupled to said consumable and said locking mechanism, said processor being programmed to identify said printing device using an identification key and to operate said locking mechanism based on identification of said printing device.

27. A printing device comprising:
a printing device memory storing an identification key;
a printing device interface through which the printing device can communicate with a printing device consumable installed in said printing device; and
a printing device controller programmed to transmit said identification key over said printing device interface to said consumable.

28. The printing device of claim 27, wherein said printing device interface comprises a wireless interface.

29. A printing device comprising:
a printing device interface configured to communicate with a memory affixed to a printing device consumable installed in said printing device; and
a printing device controller programmed to receive an identification key from said memory through said printing device interface to identify said printing device consumable.

30. The printing device of claim 29, further comprising a locking mechanism for selectively rendering said printing device inoperable, wherein said printing device controller is programmed to unlock said locking mechanism only if said identification key identifies a compatible printing device consumable.

31. A system of providing an identification key for a printing device consumable, comprising means for storing said identification key, said means for storing being affixed to said printing device consumable.

32. The system of claim 31, further comprising means for receiving said identification key in a printing device and means for accepting said printing device consumable for use in said printing device only if said identification key identifies a compatible printing device consumable.

33. The system of claim 32, further comprising locking means for selectively rendering said printing device inoperable, wherein said locking means are controlled in response to whether said printing device consumable is compatible.

34. A system for providing an identification key for a printing device, comprising:

means for transmitting an identification key from a memory of a printing device to a printing device consumable installed in said printing device; and

means for accepting said printing device for use with said printing device consumable only if said identification key identifies an authorized printing device.

35. The system of claim 34, further comprising:
locking means for selectively disabling said printing device consumable; and
means for releasing said locking means on said consumable if said identification key identifies an authorized printing device.

36. Machine-readable instructions stored on a medium for storing machine-readable instructions, said instructions, when executed, causing a processor coupled to a printing device consumable to identify a printing device using an electronic identification key received from said printing device and to operate a locking mechanism of said printing device consumable based on identification of said printing device.

37. The instructions of claim 36, wherein said instructions further cause said processor to determine whether said printing device is a member of a contract group and to operate said locking mechanism based on whether said printing device is a member of said contract group.

38. The instructions of claim 37, wherein said locking mechanism is an electronic locking mechanism.

39. The instructions of claim 38, wherein said locking mechanism is a mechanical locking mechanism.

40. The instructions of claim 38, wherein said instructions further cause said processor to request said identification key from said printing device.

41. The instructions of claim 40, wherein said instructions cause said processor to request said identification key via a wireless interface between said processor and said printing device.

42. The instructions of claim 40, wherein said instructions cause said processor to request said identification key via a wired interface between said processor and said printing device.

43. Machine-readable instructions stored on a medium for storing machine-readable instructions, said instructions, when executed, causing a printing device controller of a printing device to transmit an identification key that identifies said printing device from printing device memory to a processor affixed to a printing device consumable that is installed in said printing device.

44. The instructions of claim 43, further causing said printing device controller to transmit said identification key upon receiving a request from said processor affixed to said consumable.

45. The instructions of claim 43, further causing said printing device controller to transmit said identification key over a wireless interface with said processor.

46. The instructions of claim 43, further causing said printing device controller to transmit said identification key over a wired interface with said processor.

47. Machine-readable instructions stored on a medium for storing machine-readable instructions, said instructions, when executed, causing a printing device controller of a printing device to:

receive an identification key from a memory affixed to a printing device consumable installed in said printing device; and

determine compatibility of said consumable based on said identification key.

48. The instructions of claim 47, wherein said instructions further cause said controller to operate a locking mechanism for selectively rendering said printing device inoperable, wherein said instructions cause said controller to unlock said locking mechanism only if said identification key identifies a compatible printing device consumable.